

Troping the Asylum

when her husband was away, and she felt insulted. She relates again how her husband told her "three nights running" to go home "as my ugly face made you [her husband] sick around the house." She agreed to stay home for a month, and leave her child behind. The details of abuse and marital discord are consistent with her previous version. Her additional information, that her husband sent a rude letter to her family, "threatening me & all my people," seems consistent with other information below.

Why were all these people arrayed against Mrs. DeVere? A letter to Dr. Forster of November 21, 1911 describes yet again, but with more detail, the relations between the two families occupying different halves of Mrs. Pl--ter's house. Some of Mrs. DeVere's "voices" might have been the real voices of her "enemies," as overheard through the walls dividing the Forsters from the Pl--ters. For example, she claims to have heard Dr. McKichan's voice upstairs in her own house, and to have been told that she could not have heard him there because he had not gone in through the ground floor -- in other words she was hallucinating. She insists that the attics of both halves of the house were connected, and that Dr. McKichan had simply gone through his friend, Mrs. Pl--ter's house -- a not implausible explanation. It is similarly not implausible that at least some of the voices she claims to have heard in the radiators were simply the real voices of her neighbours, conducted through the pipes into the bedroom where she lay awake.

The motive for such a conspiracy might have been an affair between her husband and Mrs. Pl--ter, the friend of the doctor committing her. Perhaps it was something more than a case of "friendship all round," as Mrs. DeVere herself seems to suggest on November 13. It is curious that while much of her account tends toward such an explanation, she is never explicit about it, as if it might have been only too real, something she preferred not to believe, even when it was in her interest to reveal it.

As do many inmates in similar circumstances, Miss Pearl dramatizes herself writing in the evening. She is addressing one of her brothers. It is May 3, 1914:

... nearly dark and I am in a mad fever again. It seems I will have to kill a man to get out [of] Toronto Asylum. The curious eyes are more than I can stand.